

'Empty Beds' Moves European Leaders in Luxembourg Debut, Eyeing Brussels as Next Stage

A hyper-realistic installation on Russia's deported Ukrainian children moved senior EU officials to tears at its Luxembourg premiere on March 23, 2026.

LUXEMBOURG CITY, LUXEMBOURG, March 24, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On the fourth anniversary of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Bird of Light Ukraine launched the European tour of [Empty Beds](#) at the Europa Experience in Luxembourg, as part of the event "Deported Ukrainian Children: A Call for Action," organized in partnership with [LUkraine ASBL](#) and the Ombudsman of Ukraine. The premiere drew nearly 300 diplomats, European institution staff, and senior decision-makers — and left many visibly shaken.



The "Empty Beds" installation on display at the Europa Experience in Luxembourg, March 2026. The life-sized recreation of a Ukrainian teenager's bedroom invites visitors to confront the reality of Russia's forced deportation of Ukrainian children.

The installation — a life-sized, meticulously recreated bedroom frozen at the moment of a child's abduction — invites visitors to step inside the lived reality of 13-year-old "Artem," a composite character built from verified testimonies of children taken from occupied Ukraine. A perfectly made bed, scattered crafts, an emergency escape backpack, and windows taped against bomb blasts tell the story of an ordinary childhood shattered by war.

“

Childhood has an expiry date. We must act quickly.”
Oleksandra Matviichuk, Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

Dmytro Lubinets, Ombudsman of Ukraine, addressed the audience with sobering data: between February and December 2022 alone, more than 700,000

Ukrainian children were taken to Russia — more than the entire population of Luxembourg, a nation of approximately 650,000 people.

Nobel Peace Prize laureate and human rights activist Oleksandra Matviichuk delivered a keynote address to the assembled audience, issuing a phrase that resonated across the hall: "Childhood has an expiry date. We must act quickly." After leaving the stage, she stepped inside the installation for the first time — and stopped. "I had the exact same desk," she said quietly, recognizing the room's period furniture.

Among the speakers was a survivor of Russian occupation from Berdyansk, who gave testimony about her life under occupation and her experience escaping. After speaking, she entered the installation — and began to cry.

She sat at the desk and wrote in the room's journal: "I left my room just like this. I dream to come back to my room in Berdyansk. I cried when I entered this installation. This room is very familiar to me. This is a wonderful installation." Her words, written in the room itself, became one of the most powerful moments of the evening.

Claude Wiseler, President of the Luxembourg Parliament, visited the installation and stood in silence before declining an invitation to sit inside, visibly moved by what he had seen. Senior European officials and parliamentarians who visited the installation, including representatives from the European Commission and the European Parliament, expressed that the installation should travel next to Brussels.

"What happened in Luxembourg confirmed something we believed from the start," said Zhanna Galejeva, Co-Founder of Bird of Light Ukraine. "This room brings people into a real, lived experience. Just one step inside separates two realities. When people stop reading a statistic and instead sit inside a child's empty room, something shifts. That is when action becomes possible. Our children need protection, and they are waiting to return home."

Empty Beds will remain on display at the Europa Experience in Luxembourg from March 23 through April 17, 2026, as part of the coalition's extended programming. Bird of Light Ukraine is



Nobel Peace Prize laureate Oleksandra Matviichuk visits the "Empty Beds" installation alongside Zhanna Galejeva, Co-Founder of Bird of Light Ukraine, at the Europa Experience in Luxembourg on March 23, 2026. Matviichuk, who delivered the keynote address a

actively in discussions to bring the installation to the European Parliament in Brussels; dates yet to be confirmed.

Bird of Light Ukraine extends its gratitude to the creative and technical team who brought Empty Beds to life: Andrii Burianenko of Starlight Productions, whose set design gave Artem's room its haunting authenticity; and Yurii Slepak, CEO of MPH Group, whose construction and engineering expertise made the installation tour-ready. The Spring 2026 European Tour is also made possible through the generous support of The World Orphan Fund and To Ukraine with Love.

Bird of Light Ukraine is a registered US and Ukrainian charitable organization established in direct response to the full-scale invasion in 2022. Operating on a model of bridging Western resources with local action, the foundation focuses on humanitarian relief, infrastructure recovery, and high-impact advocacy. To date, the organization has impacted over 675,000 Ukrainians through programs ranging from emergency aid and water infrastructure to the establishment of IDP community centers.

Isaac Yeung

Co-Founder & Chief Operating Officer

contact@birdoflightukraine.org

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